

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03

ACDA-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06

TRSE-00 DODE-00 H-01 NSC-05 OES-06 /084 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9551

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

USDOCOSOUTH

CINCUSAFE

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 2440

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE AEGEAN

REF: ATHENS 2410

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE TURKISH MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE AEGEAN NEXT WEEK CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE ATTENTION OF THE GREEK PRESS. NEWSPAPERS TODAY (MARCH 17) REPRODUCE A GOG STATEMENT ISSUED LAST NIGHT TOGETHER WITH SOME BACKGROUND COMMENTS BY A "COMPETENT SOURCE." THE ESSENCE OF THE STATEMENT IS THAT THE GOG CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY, IN ISSUING THE RELEVANT NOTICES TO AIRMAN (NOTAMS), TO
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MAKE CERTAIN CHANGES IN THE CONDITIONS FOR THE EXERCISES AS REQUESTED BY THE GOT. ALTHOUGH THE GOG RECOGNIZES THE TURKISH RIGHT TO CONDUCT EXERCISES IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS, THE CHANGES WERE CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO MINIMIZE THE DISRUPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS IN THE AREA AFFECTED.

2. THE "COMPETENT" SOURCE, OBVIOUSLY A HIGH-LEVEL GOG OFFICIAL, NOTED THAT THE GOG HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR) INVOLVED AND ISSUES ITS NOTICES TO AIRMEN (NOTAMS) ON THE BASIS OF INTERNATIONAL RULES. HE THEN MADE THE POINTS CONTAINED IN THE STATEMENT ABOUT TURKEY'S RIGHT TO CONDUCT THE EXERCISES, ETC., CONCLUDING THAT TURKEY'S ATTITUDE HAD CREATED AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY WOULD SQUARELY FALL ON TURKEY SHOULD ANY DANGERS ARISE.

3. THE SOURCE STRESSED THAT GREECE'S POSITION WAS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL RULES AND, THEREFORE, THE GOG WOULD NOT ALLOW TURKEY TO TRY TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY TO GREECE FOR ANY MISHAP. THE GREEK POSITION WAS FIRM, HE POINTED OUT. THE SPOKESMAN ALSO NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SITUATION COULD NOT BE DESCRIBED AS EITHER "GRAVE OR SERIOUS", BECAUSE THE TURKS WERE SIMPLY TRYING TO CREATE TENSION THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE. FINALLY, HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF PLACING THE GREEK ARMED FORCES IN A STATE OF ALERT AS A RESULT OF TURKEY'S ATTITUDE, ALTHOUGH, HE CONCLUDED, SHOULD THE NEED ARISE THE GOG WOULD TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE ACTION.

4. SPEAKING TO THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF HIS NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY YESTERDAY ABOUT DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS REPORTEDLY CHARACTERIZED GREEK-TURKISH ISSUES AS CONFIDENTIAL

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BEING AT A STANDSTILL. THE PRIME MINISTER IS ALSO REPORTED AS HAVING SAID THAT, BECAUSE OF THE PREELECTORAL PERIOD, THERE IS NOBODY IN ANKARA WITH WHOM TO CONDUCT A DIALOGUE.

5. THE ENGLISH TEXT OF THE MFA STATEMENT, AS PRINTED IN THE SEMI-OFFICIAL ATHENS NEWS AGENCY (ANA) BULLETING (WITH MINOR EMBASSY TRANSLATION CHANGES), IS AS FOLLOWS:

"AS HAS ALREADY BEEN ANNOUNCED, TURKEY INTENDS TO HOLD AIR AND SEA EXERCISES IN AEGEAN INTERNATIONAL WATERS FROM 21-28 MARCH.

"IN REPLY TO A TURKISH GOVERNMENT REQUEST THAT THE COMPETENT GREEK AUTHORITIES ISSUE THE RELEVANT WARNINGS TO AIRMEN, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO AVOID DIFFICULTIES BEING CAUSED TO TRAFFIC IN THE AREA, SUGGESTED CERTAIN ALTERATIONS IN THE PLANNING OF THE EXERCISES. IN FACT, INTERNATIONAL RULES ENVISAGE THAT

EXERCISES BE PLANNED IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO AVOID
CAUSING THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBLE INCONVENIENCE TO TRAFFIC
AND, FOR THIS REASON, ENVISAGE ADVANCE CONSULTATIONS
BETWEEN THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

"THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT WAS UNWILLING TO ALTER
ITS INITIAL PLANS, CLAIMING THAT THE EXERCISES WOULD
BE CARRIED OUT IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND AIR SPACE,
AND THAT SUCH EXERCISES DID NOT RUN COUNTER TO INTER-
NATIONAL RULES. THE FIRST ARGUMENT IS CORRECT. ON
THE OTHER HAND, CAUSING DIFFICULTIES TO TRAFFIC FOR A
SUFFICIENTLY LONG TIME MOST CERTAINLY RUNS COUNTER TO
INTERNATIONALLY PREVAILING NORMS AND, THEREFORE,
CONSTITUTES A CASE OF EXCESSIVE USE OF A RIGHT.

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"IN THEIR NOTICES TO AIRMEN (THE ANA ENGLISH
VERSIONS IS "WARNINGS"), THE COMPETENT GREEK
AUTHORITIES HAVE INCLUDED SUCH RESTRICTIONS WHICH,
IN THEIR JUDGMENT, ENSURE UNOBSTRUCTED IMPLEMENTATION
OF INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULES."

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6. IN A CONVERSATION YESTERDAY WITH
DIMITRI MACRIS, ACTING MFA DIRECTOR FOR TURKISH AND
CYPRIOT AFFAIRS, MACRIS EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT OVER
TURKISH UNWILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER THE CONCERNS THE
GREEKS HAD EXPRESSED OVER CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE
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EXERCISES AS PLANNED BY THE GOT. HE AGAIN STRESSED THAT
THE GOG DID NOT QUESTION THE TURKISH RIGHT TO CONDUCT
MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE INTERNATIONAL WATERS OF THE
AEGEAN. HOWEVER, IF THE EXERCISES WERE CONDUCTED AS
PLANNED BY THE TURKS, THEY COULD NOT HELP BUT DISRUPT
COMMUNICATIONS IN SOME AREAS. THE GREEK CHANGES WHICH
WERE INCORPORATED IN THE NATOMS WERE DESIGNED TO
OVERCOME THIS AND WERE KEPT TO WHAT THE GOG BELIVES WAS THE
MINIMU NECESSARY FOR THIS PURPOSE.

7. MACRIS MAINTAINED THAT SINCE THE GOT REFUSED
TO ACCEPT THE CHANGES PROPOSED BY THE GREEKS, THE GOG
HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ISSUE ITS NOTAMS AS IT JUDGED
BEST TO ENSURE SAFETY AND THE LEAST DISRUPTION POSSIBLE IN
COMMUNICATIONS IN THE AREA. THE GOG,
HE SAID, DID NOT PLAN TO TAKE ANY FURTHER ACTION,
ALTHOUGH TURKEY WOULD BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY
INCIDENT THAT MIGHT OCCUR. THE GOG, HE SAID, WAS
TRYING TO KEEP THINGS AS CALM AS POSSIBLE
(THE EMBASSY HAS IN FACT NOTED THAT THE PRESS HAS BEEN FAR
LESS EXCITED IN ITS COVERAGE OF THE EXERCISES THESE
PAST FEW DAYS).

8. MACRIS CONCLUDED THAT THIS RECENT DEVELOPMENT
OVER THE MILITARY EXERCISES SEEMED TO FIT IN WITH THE
GENERAL PATTERN OF TURKISH BEHAVIOR RECENTLY WHICH
LED THE GREEKS TO QUSTION TURKISH INTENTIONS. FOR
EXAMPLE, THE EXERCISES COVERED A MUCH WIDER AREA
AND WOULD TAKE PLACE OVER A LONGER PERIOD, AND FOR
MORE HOURS EACH DAY, THAN WAS NORMALLY THE CASE. THE
GREEKS DOUBTED THERE WERE SUFFICIENT TURKISH SHIPS AND
AIRCRAFT IN THE AEGEAN TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN FOR THE
EXERCISES. THEY THUS WONDERED WHAT THE TURKS WERE UP
TO. HE SAID ONE SHOULD ADD TO THIS THE FACT THE
TURKS HAD STILL NOT RESPONDED TO THE GREEKS WITH A
PROPOSAL ON WHEN THE NEXT ROUND SHOULD TAKE
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PLACE IN THE CONTINENTAL SHELF TALKS. THERE HAD BEEN AN UNDERSTANDING THEY WOULD RESUME IN PARIS THE LATTER PART OF MARCH. AND THE GREEKS WERE STILL WAITING TO RECEIVED THE LONG-AWAITED TURKISH COUNTER-PROPOSAL ON THE AIR SPACE (FIR) QUESTION. MACRIS CONCLUDED WITH AN EXPRESSION OF PESSIMISM OVER PROSPECTS IN THE CYPRUS TALKS AND SAID THE GREEKS FEARED THE TURKS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN ANY PROGRESS BEING ACHIEVED IN VIENNA AT THE END OF THE MONTH BUT THAT THE TURKS WOULD SEEK TO STALL UNTIL AFTER THEIR ELECTIONS.

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